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East Timor : ABRI must stop the Paramilitary Units

"The Indonesian Government and Armed Forces (ABRI) are failing to protect East Timorese pro-independence supporters despite warnings of attacks by paramilitaries in East Timor, this weekend," Amnesty International said.

Following a rally of some 1,500 paramilitary members in the streets of Dili, capital of East Timor, attacks have been carried out on the homes of pro-independence supporters.

Among those targeted have been Manuel Carrascalao, former member of parliament, and Leandru Ishac, deputy head of the political wing of the East Timorese resistance, the National Council of East Timorese Resistance (CNRT).

Several refugees seeking shelter in Manuel Carrascalao's house are known to have been killed by the paramilitary units in the assault. Although the precise number of those killed is not clear ABRI have reportedly admitted that eight people have died.

Two foreign journalists were threatened and beaten as they tried to escape from the assault.

"If there was ever any doubt about the complicity of the Indonesian military in the pro-integration paramilitary activities in East Timor, its refusal to act to stop the attacks this weekend confirms its role," said Amnesty International.

There are now grave fears for the safety of pro-independence supporters, human rights monitors and journalists. The Indonesian Armed Forces must be pressured to act to stop the violence by the paramilitary units.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Atlas is due to agree with the Portugese Government on an autonomy package for East Timor on 22 April at the United Nations in New York.

"It is difficult to see how Indonesia can continue to negotiate on the autonomy package in good faith when its forces are allowing paramilitary units to wage a campaign of terror on the population of East Timor," said Amnesty International.

Amnesty International is calling for immediate disarming and disbanding of paramilitary units and the deployment of UN human rights monitors to East Timor.
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